DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 258 456 FL 015 084

AUTHOR Kyle, Patricia J.
TITLE The Communicative Computer Compares: A CALL Design Project for Elementary French.
PUB DATE Apr 85
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (32nd, New York , NY, April 25-28, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Athletics; Classroom Techniques; *Communicative Competence (Languages); *Computer Assisted Instruction; *Courseware; *French; Grammar; Higher Education; Program Descriptions; Reading Comprehension; *Second Language Instruction; *Simulation

ABSTRACT

A computer lesson entitled "Aux Jeux Olympiques" (To the Olympic Games) simulates an ongoing situational dialog between the French student and the PLATO computer system. It offers an international setting for functional learning exercises focusing on students' understanding and use of comparative constructions, selected verbs, and other linguistic forms in French, and provides communicative language practice. The courseware is used in the first three semesters of college-level language instruction. The students' task is to describe simulated sports events, including French team trials, international eliminations, and final rounds, seen on the computer screen. The program occasionally provides a sports news recap of events with team rankings. Visual, psychomotor, and cognitive domains are exploited to enhance language learning, linguistic production is minimized so that even one-word responses have fixed forms, and no penalties are given for misspellings, grammatical errors, or typing mistakes. Communicative feedback is given continually by using slightly more complex structures to reinforce or correct student responses and build reading comprehension from the outset. The use of this and other computer-assisted language learning units (CALL) has proven to be cost-effective, efficient, and motivating for students. The disadvantages in their use arise from the restraints of the academic environment and of a developing technology. The current task is to use and improve the existing resources for CALL. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED258456

The Communicative Computer Compares: A CALL Design Project for Elementary French

Patricia J. Kyle
April 1985

An important challenge facing language teachers today is discovering how to exploit computer technology in ways that will stimulate students to communicate in the target language. Communication takes place at various degrees of approximation depending on the linguistic level of the learner, cultural context and specific situation in which both learning and communication occur. In its premier role as an instructional aid, a computer lesson unit entitled "Aux Jeux Olympiques" ('To the Olympic Games') simulates an on-going situational dialogue between the student of French and PLATO, the friendly mainframe computer-tutor. The Olympic Games offer an international setting for functional learning exercises that focus on students' understanding and use of the comparative construction in French. While its pedagogical role is indeed tantalizing, the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) unit has an additional task. "Aux Jeux Olympiques" shows how the use of electronic learning materials can be extended to provide communicative language practice both inside and outside the classroom. Clearly, language instructors who use CALL units creatively can reach out to a larger number of students with activities that appeal to a variety of learning styles.

Goals and Objectives

Students in the first three semesters of French study at Indiana University stand to benefit from working with the "Aux Jeux Olympiques"

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Patricia J. Kyle

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

FL 015084

These students are fulfilling a university language requirement and normally enroll in one of the regular multi-section courses that meet three or four times per week for one semester. Accelerated and "Communicative Skills" track courses are open to a restricted number of talented language learners. In addition, there is a reading track for students mainly interested in concentrating on learning to read and write French.

By the end of the first semester of study in the regular French program, students are expected to be able to identify vocabulary and structures that they can use in their own speaking and writing. At the end of the second semester, students should have limited use of linguistic elements from the first semester and be able to recognize a basic corpus of vocabulary and structures seen in both semesters. Specifically, students should be able to read general French prose from magazines and newspapers and understand the basic ideas in a news broadcast or lecture. These goals are realistic ones for language learners and are held by many elementary and intermediate foreign language programs in universities and high schools.

In "Aux Jeux Olympiques," primary focus is on building students' ability to recognize a variety of structures for expressing the comparative and superlative using adverbs. The students' task is to describe actions seen on the computer screen. Graphics and animation reinforce student comprehension of the comparative constructions as well as of selected verbs and other linguistic forms all in an effort to build reading comprehension. Since the approach

is comprehension based, it can be adapted for aural use when an audio component becomes available.

The principal language function emphasized is description. Students watch and compare competitive performance in simulated sports events at the French team trials in Lessons 1 and 2, international eliminating events in Lesson 3, and final rounds in Lesson 4. Minimal linguistic production (i.e., typed input) is required to work through "Aux Jeux Olympiques". Touch-screen and simple keyboard responses provide all the necessary student input. Care is taken to build recognition of more complex structures while shifting the students' attention away from the particular grammar and vocabulary content.

Description of "Aux Jeux Olympiques"

The "Aux Jeux Olympiques" unit is composed of four lessons. Lesson 1, entitled "La Course à Pied", is an interactive tutorial that gives a simple inductive presentation of the material using text and graphics to simulate rounds of the 100-meter and 200-meter men's running events. Four participants are gradually reduced to one winner in order to illustrate which athletes run faster ('plus vite'), as fast ('aussi vite'), or fastest ('le plus vite') and who performs better ('mieux'), worse ('moins bien'), best ('le mieux') or worst ('le moins bien'). An approximated communicative dialogue format gradually draws students into the tutorial lesson. Students need only touch the name of the appropriate athlete to indicate

which one fits the description given by PLATO. In turn, PLATO provides communicative messages in its feedback for student responses.

[Insert: Figure 1]

At the end of the tutorial lesson, PLATO displays a chart that recaps the results of the competitions. A short descriptive text compares the athletes' performances using the comparative structures already seen in Lesson 1. Students rank the athletes by typing the first letter of the name corresponding to first, second (a tie), and fourth place results. In the final analysis, PLATO names the first and second place runners to the French men's team.

After completing the tutorial, students may move on to Lesson 2, "Les Compétitions Préliminaires". Here, PLATO seeks a diagnostic evaluation of comprehension success. Three more sports events are simulated: la natation ('swimming'), le saut en hauteur ('high jump'), and le saut en longeur ('long jump'). The adverbs vite ('fast'), haut ('high'), and loin ('far') describe individual performances by male and female competitors. As in the tutorial lesson, the final results of simulated competitions are meaningful: some athletes will make the French Olympic team while others will be eliminated.

[Insert: Figure 2]

PLATO judges student responses and reports a score that is used to determine where the student will go next in the unit. A success

Figure 1: Sample screen displays, Lesson 1 of "Aux Jeux Olympiques".

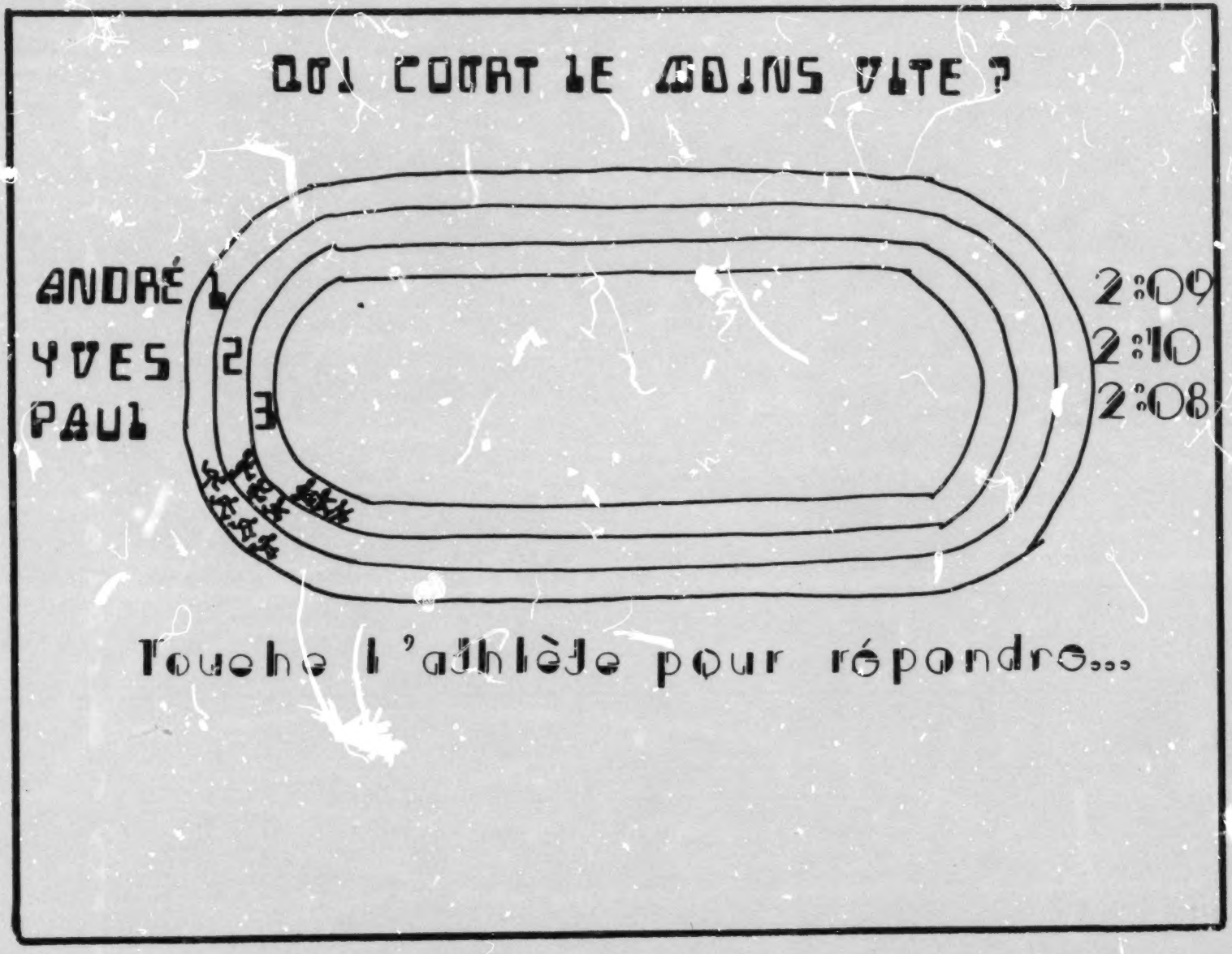
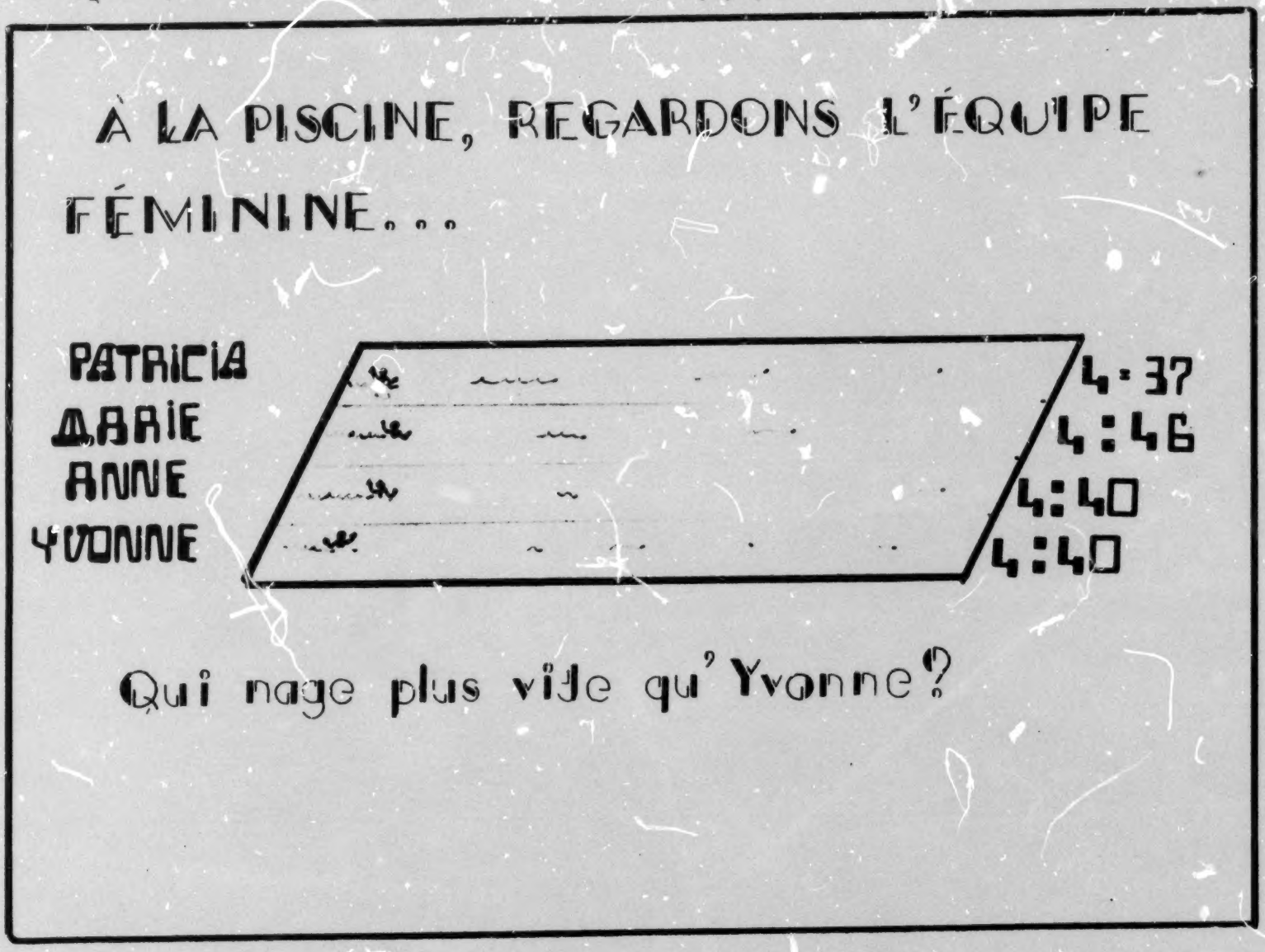


Figure 2: Sample screen display, Lesson 2 of "Aux Jeux Olympiques".



rate of 80% or higher signals PLATO to direct the student to Lesson 3 for the next activity. Students with scores under 80% are encouraged to get a deductive explanation of the comparative and superlative constructions with adverbs. Following this additional instruction, students have the choice of returning to the tutorial, getting additional practice in Lesson 2, or advancing to Lesson 3.

[Insert: Figure 3]

In order to work in Lesson 3 students must understand the linguistic material from Lessons 1 and 2. In "Les Compétitions Internationales", the student selects a sports event from PLATO's Olympic program and chooses three international teams to compete in that event. The national teams represented are France, Italy, Germany, the Soviet Union, Mexico, Canada and Greece. PLATO supplies simple randomized data on the three athletes slated for participation in these initial rounds of international sports competitions.

Students take on the role of sportscaster and use the information given by PLATO to help predict the outcome of the upcoming events. Students respond to the question, "Qui va gagner?" ('Who is going to win?') by typing in the initial of the athlete's first name. PLATO then simulates the competition and leaves it up to the student to record the outcome by filling in the appropriate element of the comparative or superlative construction: plus ('more'), moins ('less'), aussi ('as'), le plus ('most'), and le moins ('least') as well as

INDIVIDUALIZED BRANCHING

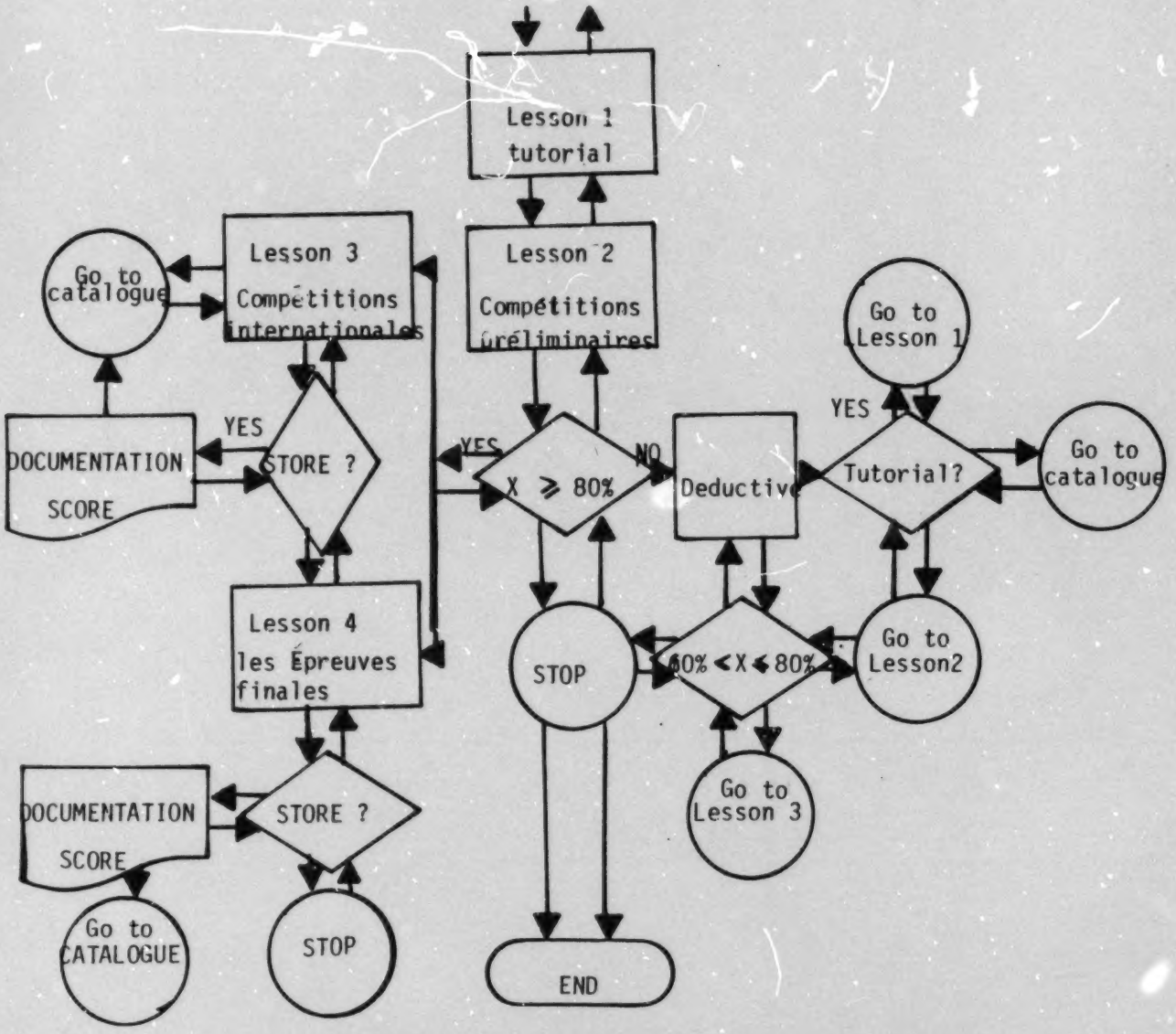


Figure 3: Branching design for "Aux Jeux Olympiques, suggested route.

mieux ('better'), and le mieux ('best').

After students have completed several of these simulations, PLATO provides a recap of the sports news by ranking the teams according to their records in the beginning rounds of the Olympic competitions. A short descriptive passage helps students review the results. Successful reading comprehension is highly motivated since it is used to help the student reach a goal:success in the role playing activity. Motivation may be increased even more if students work in pairs to complete Lesson 3. Students can consult with each other in the target language to decide jointly about predictions and team rankings.

Information gained in Lesson 3 becomes even more meaningful when students use it in Lesson 4, "Les Épreuves Finales". This time, students take on the role of the French team coach and become responsible for making coaching decisions that will determine the sucess or failure of the team in final international competition. PLATO selects the sports event and two of the teams to participate. The French team will be the third in the match. It is up to the French coach to examine the possibilities for winning the given event. As coach, the student must try to select the athlete from the French team who stands the best chance of winning a medal.

Students working alone or in small coaching teams keep track of data by filling inthe comparative construction with appropriate elements and athletes' first initials:

Example: (Yyyyy) court (plus) vite que Paul mais (Xxxxx) court (moins) vite que lui.

PLATO helps students analyze the information on the athletes by giving reinforcement in the form of communicative feedback.

Students' success in Lesson 4 is determined by the effectiveness of the coaching decisions rather than the production of accurate linguistic forms or structures. In fact, students never type an entire comparative or superlative construction in "Aux Jeux Olympiques". A multiple-choice format is maintained in a natural way since limiting choices and competing against PLATO are logical focal points for reinforcing the competitive spirit emphasized in the CALL unit and in the notion of comparison making.

At any time while working in "Aux Jeux Olympiques" students may ask for help (AIDE) or a word gloss, branch to another part of the unit, go back or forward screen by screen, or leave the unit completely. Before ending work in "Aux Jeux Olympiques" students may record comments in English to express their reactions to the material or to their experience at the computer. This debriefing segment allows both instructors and students to evaluate the CALL unit by responding to a few simple questions. Finally, PLATO always says "good-bye" ('au revoir') before signing off.

Language Pedagogy and CALL Design:An Eclectic Approach

Flexibility is one of the key assets of the design for "Aux Jeux Olympiques" both as an internal feature of the organization of the material and as an external methodological feature that makes it adaptable to the academic teaching situation. Inside the unit,

the branching capability allows students and instructors to take advantage of a variety of user strategies. Teachers may promote individualized learning by modifying the program to serve the needs of a particular class or individual student. In addition, students may work at their own pace, by themselves or in small groups, and can make choices concerning their own routes through the unit. Because it offers such a variety of possible uses, "Aux Jeux Olympiques" can be a valuable educational aid for many types of learners.

Visual, psycho-motor, and cognitive domains are exploited to enhance language learning with the computer. Linguistic production is minimized so that even one-word responses have fixed (i.e., uninflected) forms. As a result of the concern for response economy, students' work at the computer is speedy. At the same time, meaningful input from students is given without fear of penalty for misspellings, grammatical errors or typing mistakes. PLATO continually supplies communicative feedback using structures of a slightly higher complexity to correct or reinforce student responses. It is in this way that PLATO starts building reading comprehension skill from the very beginning of the unit.

"Aux Jeux Olympiques" takes advantage of its built-in flexibility to promote student-centered learning. It is the students who are in control, choosing their own direction and facing one PLATO challenge after another. Furthermore, linguistic material presented in a cyclical manner helps students gain more independent use of the forms and structures in focus. Material familiar to the student is used to

set up the theme oriented simulations and games using verbs learned previously, such as courir ('to run'), nager ('to swim'), sauter ('to jump'), jouer ('to play'), aller ('go') and faire ('to do' or 'to make'). Country names, nationalities, and English cognates make the material in the CALL unit easy to understand; an effort is made to continually provide comprehensible input. The building process is motivating since the activities become more and more challenging as students progress. Cognitive skills for decision-making and problem-solving are important in Lessons 3 and 4 because they serve to draw students into the material without focusing on linguistic content. Emphasis is on functional language use.

Principles of several non-traditional language teaching methodologies have been adapted for use in "Aux Jeux Olympiques". The eclectic approach to CALL methodology draws on functional language activities (Functional-Notional Approach), limited production of linguistic forms in the early stages of language learning (Comprehension-based Approach), psycho-motor responses (Total Physical Response) and approximated communication in the target language (Natural Approach). The foremost goal is to increase learner motivation by focusing on understanding so that students use language naturally and in accordance with a global view of the learning situation.

Applications to the Academic Teaching Situation

"Aux Jeux Olympiques" may represent a valuable addition to the curriculum of the Indiana University French program. Maximum use of

individualized language learning can be made in the regular track second-semester French course (F 150) where CALL units like this one would be used to present new material and then brought back later for additional practice or review. Self-paced learning with CALL would benefit students in first-semester accelerated classes where emphasis is on advancing as quickly as possible. In second-semester special track courses and third-semester regular courses the unit would provide motivating review or remedial work for slow learners. Moreover, use of the materials could help articulate the first and second-year programs while adding some continuity to the multi-track system.

For the classroom, functional computer activities can provide models for functional classroom activities. Establishing a link between materials and classroom practices is essential in any proficiency-oriented program. Oral practice of the simpler structures and forms seen in "Aux Jeux Olympiques" is accomplished by simply making a transparency drawing of any of the competitive events and then using it to cue listening and speaking exercises. Classroom role play can easily be modeled after the situations presented in Lessons 3 and 4. In addition, students may take on identities of famous athletes and interview each other to get specific information. Outside the classroom, students may find it very motivating to work on computer assignments in small groups. Teachers can go one step further and promote writing practice by asking students to make out reports on the results found in Lesson 4 of the "Aux Jeux Olympiques"

unit. With data sheets, students could keep track of results in the lesson and then base their reports on that specific information. More reading could be provided in an authentic text about the Olympics or about some other sports occasion. As a follow-up activity, the reading would reinforce both classroom practice and the work actually done at the computer.

It seems that using a series of functional CALL units as the base for language instruction could offer many benefits to learners. However, such an innovation would demand that we take serious responsibility for implementing computer materials and use considerable creativity in applying them to the language teaching situation. Keeping in mind the goals of (1) increasing learners' communicative ability, (2) improving articulation in the language learning program, and (3) enriching the foreign language curriculum, we can be optimistic in combining eclecticism and electronics.

Assessing the New Technology:Advantages and Disadvantages

Indeed, there are several advantages to be gained by integrating computer lesson units such as "Aux Jeux Olympiques" into the foreign language program. First of all, the CALL unit is cost-effective in that it can serve a maximum number of learners in many different ways. Learning is efficient since the unit is designed to operate quickly and to route students through the unit individually. CALL enriches an eclectic approach to language learning by contributing its unique capabilities as an educational medium:branching, personalized feed-

back, positive reinforcement, infinite practice, record keeping and documentation. Clearly, CALL materials must be examined with some scrutiny and earnestly integrated into existing programs.

It is essential that we be realistic in our approach to computer aided language learning. Even a large mainframe computer like the one that houses the PLATO authoring system cannot judge meaning beyond the sentence level at the present time. It is therefore desirable to maximize the possibilities offered by simple objective formats like multiple-choice and true/false. In no way does this restrict the computer to drill-and-practice or other mechanical exercises. We can use the computer to stimulate comprehension-based learning while appealing to different cognitive skills to make CALL activities more challenging. As a result, the work will be more motivating for students and therefore more effective overall. As a final component of the "Aux Jeux Olympiques" unit, it would be beneficial to add authentic cultural readings adapted from francophone newspapers and magazines. PLATO could then go further in teaching the reading skill by providing reading passages for each level of language learning through the second year of university study.

The disadvantages involved in CALL implementation and development draw mainly from the restrictions imposed by the academic environment and from working with a developing technology. Presently, academic constraints on time, funding and personnel slow down progress in CALL design and implementation. For this reason, it is important to take advantage of materials and equipment already available. Fortunately,

a large stock of CALL materials is available on PLATO. However, since there are only about twenty PLATO terminals for student and faculty use, integrating these materials into a large language program will demand considerable planning. Course coordinators will have to set up computer laboratory sessions for all classes and promote communicative pair work and small group work at the terminal. In schools and universities with microcomputer laboratories, instructors can take advantage of other types of CALL materials now available and they may even create their own. The development of the DASHER template system by James Pusack has enabled teachers to devise personalized mechanical exercises for students at the beginning levels of German, Spanish, French and English as a Second Language. In looking toward the future, we can predict that communicative CALL lessons like John Underwood's "FAMILIA" will become even more valuable as technology advances. When speech synthesis and analysis are better developed, perhaps spoken dialogues with the computer will be possible and desirable.

Of major concern for us, however, is deciding how the computer can best be used today. The computer can be used right now to aid reading comprehension. It is in this area that sophisticated pedagogical materials are technically feasible and thus where more investigation is called for. The design of "Aux Jeux Olympiques" is flexible enough that it can be used now for promoting reading comprehension up to the paragraph level while tomorrow it may be successful at combining textual and aural practice as it continues to manage classroom records.

Success in CALL work is not easily accomplished nor is it reached by isolated individuals. Active CALL users must be involved in all stages of preparation of computer materials. The idea for "Aux Jeux Olympiques" drew from a daily lesson plan designed to simulate a communicative context for practicing the vocabulary, grammar notes and dialogue scheduled for presentation in a second-semester French class on a given day. Students got T.P.R. (Total Physical Response) practice by doing exercises ('gymnastique') and running in place. They made oral picture-cued comparisons and spoke about their own sports abilities compared to those of their siblings. Overall, the theme-centered class proved to be a highly motivating one for students.

Clearly, the role of the language teacher can be defined as that of facilitator, one who works to facilitate communication between students using the target language in an acquisition-rich environment. The computer can be challenged to fit in and become part of a language program that emphasizes communication. The "Aux Jeux Olympiques" design represents an attempt to determine how successfully CALL can respond to the demands of the Indiana French program and other similar programs elsewhere. Continued creative work with CALL design and integration into classroom activities promises to bring even more benefits to the language learning situation.

Conclusion

"Aux Jeux Olympiques" presents specific examples illustrating an eclectic approach to the design of computer language learning materials

that promote functional language use by focusing on global comprehension. In itself, computer-based language instruction offers an innovative way to provide student-centered learning. Not surprizingly, elements of both fact and fantasy are present in any work with CALL: It is fact that the computer can be called on to add its capabilities to other non-traditional approaches to language teaching and learning. However, new ideas will remain fantasy unless all those involved with language learning, including instructors, students, administrators, courseware designers and publishers, help push CALL to its greatest potential as a facilitating aid to second language acquisition.

Bibliography

1. Alessi, Stephen M. and Richard Dennis. 1979. Designing Instruction for Teaching with a Computer. Department of Secondary Education, University of Illinois.
2. Asher, James J. 1982. Learning Another Language Through Actions: The Complete Teacher's Guidebook. Los Gatos, Cal.: Sky Oaks Productions, Inc. (Second edition).
3. Blair, Robert L. 1982. Innovative Approaches to Language Teaching. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.
4. Burke, Robert L. 1982. C.A.I. Sourcebook. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
5. Finocchiaro, Mary. 1982. The Functional-Notional Approach from Theory to Practice. New York: Oxford University Press.
6. Gunterman, Gail. 1979. "Purposeful Communication Practice: Developing Functional-Notional Proficiency in a Foreign Language." FLA, 12, 3 (May) 219-225.
7. Krashen, Stephen D. and Tracy D. Terrell. 1983. The Natural Approach. San Francisco: Allemany Press.
8. Moirand, Sylvie. 1982. Enseigner à communiquer en langue étrangère. Paris: Hachette.
9. Omaggio, Alice. 1984. "The Proficiency-Oriented Classroom." in Teaching for Proficiency, the Organizing Principle. Theodore V. Higgs, ed. Lincolnwood, Illinois: National Textbook Company.

10. Pusack, James. 1982. "C.A.I. in Foreign Languages." Pipeline, 6, 2: 5-8, 10.

11. Savignon, Sandra. 1978. "Teaching for Communication." in Developing Communication Skills, E. Joiner and P. Westphal, eds. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

12. Underwood, John. 1984. Linguistics, Computers and the Language Teacher. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

13. ———. 1982. "Simulated Conversation as a C.A.I. Strategy." FLA, 15, 3: 209-212.

14. Valdman, Albert. 1978. "Communicative Use of Language and Syllabus Design." FLA, 11, 5 (October), 567-578.

15. Wilkins, D. A. 1976. Notional Syllabuses. London: Oxford Press.

16. Winitz, Harris, ed. 1981. The Comprehension Approach to Foreign Language Instruction. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.